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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 000020

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E.O. 12958: Declassify 01/13/1919

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [PINR](#) [MD](#)

SUBJECT: Ambassador Presses Senior Presidential Advisor on NDI Visa and Registration--Again

Refs: A. Chisinau 0015 B. 08 Chisinau 1235

Classified by Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry under 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In a January 13 meeting, Ambassador Chaudhry once again pressed senior presidential advisor Sergiu Stati to renew the work and residence permit of National Democratic Institute (NDI) Country Director Alex Grigorievs. Repeating his December 8 reply (ref B), Stati said the issue would be solved in a couple of days. In the latest meeting, Stati gave stronger support for democratic elections and NDI democracy-building activities, but hinted at concerns about outside interference and the "personal activities of the NDI leader." End summary.

Presidential Advisor's Thanks for USG Support

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¶2. (C) Stati opened the meeting with thanks to the USG for actively supporting Moldova's democratic and economic reform and development. He stated that the Government of Moldova (GOM) was convinced that any organization (including NDI and IRI) supported by the U.S. Government would operate within the limits of Moldovan laws and in the best interests of the country. He noted that he had nothing against the NDI, and wanted NDI and IRI to continue to operate in the country. Stati even expressed hope that the USG would continue to support the development of democratic institutions in Moldova, and would point out problems with the democratic process when needed. The Ambassador stressed that Moldova and the United States are partners and friends, and need to be able to trust each other's words and promises. Stati said that he understood.

Still No Renewal of NDI Director's Residency

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¶3. (C) The Ambassador told Stati that he was delighted to hear of GOM support for democratically run elections and NDI activities, but stressed that actual events were in conflict with the claims. The Ambassador instanced GOM pressure on PRO TV and freedom of assembly, and questioned why decade-old cases were being resurrected against opposition politicians. In particular, the Ambassador noted his--and Washington's--concern that the unfinished business of NDI's registration, and NDI Country Director Alex Grigorievs's work and residence permit, continued to linger. The failure to resolve the issue was particularly puzzling, the Ambassador noted, in light of President Voronin's December 22

promise to the Ambassador that the issue would be solved (ref A). Voronin made the promise after the Ambassador assured him that he would hold NDI accountable if it strayed from its party-neutral mandate of democracy-building in Moldova.

¶4. (C) Stati declared that he would raise the issue of Grigorievs's visa with the President. He expressed confidence that, based on the clear assurances of NDI neutrality provided by the Ambassador, he would obtain the President's approval to positively resolve the residence permit issue. Stati expressed his surprise that the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) had refused to register the NDI, and said that he would also call the Minister of Justice to discuss its refusal of registration to NDI. (Note: The MOJ refused registration in August 2008 on the grounds that there was already another organization in Moldova called the National Democratic Institute. The MOJ again refused registration in December because, *inter alia*, the new name--National Democratic Institute of Moldova--did not correspond to NDI's title in the United States. End note.)

¶5. (C) Stati repeated several times his belief that NDI was doing good work in Moldova, but ignored the Ambassador's question, "Why does the PCRM create a bad impression for nothing, if it's the best organized party in Moldova?" In response to the Ambassador's recommendation that the PCRM take advantage of NDI training, Stati replied that

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the PCRM had actually benefitted from NDI training before the 2005 parliamentary elections. Stati also said that Grigorievs had stated in 2005 that the PCRM had taken over all the seminars and it was time for them to take advantage of NDI training. This was Stati's only direct criticism of Grigorievs. At the beginning of the meeting, Stati said that he and the Ambassador needed to "discuss the personal activities of the NDI leader," and later raised the issue of outside interference in elections. When the Ambassador asked for details, Stati declared that it was premature to discuss the issue, since the election campaign had not yet begun. The Ambassador again assured Stati that the NDI and IRI would operate strictly within the guidelines of their mandate to develop democracy and democratic institutions in an impartial manner. That answer seemed satisfactory to Stati, as it did to Voronin on December 22.

Comment

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¶6. (C) Stati was either out of the loop regarding Voronin's promises and other GOM activities, or was not telling everything he knew. He was clearly embarrassed at the number of hours that the Ambassador was spending on what ought to be a simple issue. His earnest assurances that all would be well with Grigorievs and the NDI rang hollow in light of the delays that have occurred. Stati's hint that Grigorievs was interfering in Moldova's politics may, worryingly, indicate the core beliefs of President Voronin and some of his close advisors.

Chaudhry